

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

BY CAROLINE C. WOOD.

"Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
A creature was stirring, not even a mouse.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.
The children were hushed in their beds,
And the old folks were snoring in their heads.
The wind was a-whistling and the snow was a-fall,
And the stars were a-twinkling on the frosty wall.

"Come in," said the little woman,
"You have been very kind to notice her
So much, and she has grown really fond of you;
Come here, Mabel." "But—no!" I stammered, "are you
her mother—no—no—no!" "Washwoman! Yes; do not be afraid
to say it; you see I am not, and she
laughed and said, 'I thought you were.'
I hid my confused face over Mabel,
who was easily persuaded to sit in my
lap. She was a lovely child, but so
delicate, so frail, that the blue veins
could be traced on her temples and
hands with threatening distinctness,
and she was as light as a bird. So this
was the woman, whose society I had
disliked, this gentle, patient, lady-
like, almost girlish woman; but then,
how could she wash? such hard, dis-
agreeable work. Later, she told me
that it was all she could do.

"I dare say your mother has told you," she said, "that I was the young-
est child of a southern clergyman, and
brought up to do nothing and know
nothing useful. Look at these hands—
almost parabolical, isn't they? Well,
they've been a fortune to me."

"For little washed hands!" I asked the
mother, wondering; "what do you mean?"
"Nine children, and seven boys to
boot," she replied, the stranger, adding
bitterly: "I have but two, and each
one of them is a nail in my coffin."

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"The father and mother managed very
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One day there came a guest to the
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A Happy Home.

(From the German.)

A pretty story about a German family
discloses the secret of a happy home,
wherein joy abounded, though there
were many to feed and clothe.

A teacher once lived in Strasbourg,
who had hard work to support his family.
His chief joy in life, however, was in
his nine children, though it was no light
task to feed them all.

His mother-in-law had reared and his
heart even had not been trusted in his
humble Father when he thought of the
number of jackets, shoes, stockings
and dresses they would use in the course
of a year, and the quantity of bread and
potatoes they would eat.

His home, too, was very close quar-
ters for the many beds and cribs, to say
nothing of the room required for the
noise and fun which the merry nine
made.

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Christmas Evergreens.

The use of evergreens and flowers as
a means of decoration seems an instinct
of human nature. Green boughs were
used by the Jews at the Feast of Taber-
nacles, and the Romans crammed their
temples and houses with them, during
the Feast of Saturn. The ancient
Druids hung green branches and the
mistletoe over the doors as a propiti-
ation to the woodland spirits. A survival
of this superstition was found among the
English peasantry, not two hundred
years ago. They hung up evergreens
in their cottages, in the belief that the
sylvan sprites would flock thereto, and
the boughs would be recognized and
by the frost laid a milder season. The
English custom of decking houses and
churches with evergreens at Christmas
springs, therefore, from an ancient
practice and a human instinct. The
foreign plants are holly, bay, rosemary,
laurel and ivy. Objection was formerly
made to the use of ivy in church decora-
tions on account of its associations with
the orgies in honor of Bacchus. The
mistletoe was also excluded because it
was the plant which was held in great
veneration by the heathen rites of the
Druids.

Though excommunicated from the
church the mistletoe was the popular
plant for decorating English homes.
When Druidism was the religion of the
Britons the mistletoe was used in great
veneration. It was gathered with mystic
rites from the oak on which it had
grown, and then, divided into small
pieces, distributed among the people.

They hung up the sprays over their
dwellings as a propitiation to and
shelter for the very winter spirits
which came of frost. Even as late as
the sixteenth century a piece of mistletoe
suspended from the neck was supposed
to guard the wearer from the baleful
influence of evil.

In modern times the mistletoe has
a tendency to attract men toward
witches of a fairer face and more amiable
nature. A branch of the mystic plant is
at Christmas hung from the ceiling. If
any man or boy can coax or
persuade a girl to stand under it, he
sprays her, he is entitled to kiss her.
Gossip does report that maidens have
been known to pass on purpose under
the salute-provoking branch.

For the next morning at eleven
o'clock the old Christmas carols were
found sung in practice of the
greens used in decorations. Of the
holly it is said:

"Here comes the holly that is so good,
And its leaves are so green,
To please all the children,
And to cheer the old men."

The ivy is praised in these lines:
"Ivy is ivy and meek of speech,
Against all the world,
Will be that may reach."

Carrying Pure Air in a Knapsack.
Successful experiments have been
carried on by Mr. Warrington Smythe,
at the New South College, near New-
castle, England, with a view to
the Flumes breathing apparatus. The
importance of this invention will be
apparent when it is known that the
average man is exposed to a certain
amount of air pollution in his daily
life.

The apparatus has the size and shape
of a soldier's knapsack, and is made
of a material which is impervious to
air. It is divided into four longitudinal
compartments, fitted up so as to secure
the complete circulation through them
of the purest air. The air is drawn
in through a valve at the top, and is
expelled through a valve at the bottom.

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air. It is divided into four longitudinal
compartments, fitted up so as to secure
the complete circulation through them
of the purest air. The air is drawn
in through a valve at the top, and is
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Parental Love.

A FATHER'S STORY OF IRELAND.

In our party, writes Mr. Locke, was
an American gentleman who was dis-
cussing the subject of parental love,
and he and his wife had been con-
templating the adoption of a girl. There
was an opportunity to secure not only
a girl, but just the kind of a girl that
he would have given half his estate
to be father of; and so he opened
negotiations.

An Irishman who knew him explained
to the father and mother that the
gentleman was a man of means; that his
wife was an excellent cook, and that
the child would be regularly educated
under the laws of the State in which
he lived, and would rank equally with
his own children in the matter of inher-
itance.

Then the American struck in. She,
the mother, might select a girl to ac-
company the child across the Atlantic,
and the girl selected should go into the
family as the child's nurse, and the
child should be reared in the religion of
its parents.

The father and mother consulted long
and anxiously. It was a terrible
decision. The father was a man of
means, and the mother was a woman
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